

## Fourth Sunday of Easter – April 26, 2026 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call." He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

### Psalm: Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;  
beside restful waters he leads me;  
he refreshes my soul.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

He guides me in right paths  
for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk in the dark valley  
I fear no evil; for you are at my side  
with your rod and your staff  
that give me courage.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

You spread the table before me  
in the sight of my foes;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Only goodness and kindness follow me  
all the days of my life;  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
for years to come.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

### Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:20b-25

Beloved: If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

### Gospel: John 10:1-10

Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."



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## **Fourth Sunday of Easter – April 26, 2026 – Good Shepherd Parish**

### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

A shepherd once told me that sheep are completely helpless if they are unshorn, especially if they get turned on their back. Maybe you and I remember our childhood when we turned various insects on their back to watch them struggle and never achieve their proper legside down position—without help. Another thing about sheep is their loyalty. It does shade into stupidity, the way they follow the shepherd without question. But there is something deeply symbolic of love if the shepherd is kind and careful with them. History tells us that all the sheep were kept together in a big sheepfold where the various shepherds had brought their small herds down to Jerusalem. Without brands, without markings of any kind, how, you might ask, does each shepherd get back the sheep that belong to him or to his boss? Well, first, the shepherd calls each of his flock by name. He has been with them on the hillsides so that he knows just who each sheep is. The one with the nick in its ear, the one with the pretty face, the one that limps. There is a name for each one because they are not just a herd; each has a personality that is special, just like human beings. And second, the sheep each recognize not only the name he calls them by, but the actual voice of the shepherd. It is a much loved sound to them. The one who flipped them back on their feet when he found them upside down. The one who protected them from wolves. The one who took them to fresh pastures when they had eaten the fields down to nubs. A stranger's voice could not have the gentle resonance of their own master and friend.

Alright, so why does Jesus use sheep imagery on the upcoming fourth Sunday of Easter? I suppose it is obvious but, if you will pardon the comparison, you and I are a lot like sheep. The shepherd calls us each by name—the utter God of the universe does this (of the galaxy, infinity, etc.). God is great enough that in Jesus he knows each and every one of us better than we know ourselves. The name he uses for each of us reaches way down into the full potential of our souls, calling us to be most truly who we are in ourselves and in the Lord. An intimate recognition within each of us responds. And, like the sheep, each of us knows by heart the sound of God's voice. Alright, we may misunderstand it, ignore it, resist it, slam all our gateways shut to it, but in our moments of sane and solitary wholeness our spirits know the sound of that voice. It resonates within us. Whichever ones of us are free hearken and follow. The call is safe, in spite of wolves and wildness all around. The call lets our fear drop away, turns us right side up so that we can go follow our master and friend over rocks and even through dark valleys. Often people insult the human race by calling it a bunch of sheep. But this Sunday it is the greatest compliment we could get.

### **.INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. Those listening to Peter's sermon were "cut to the heart." Does anything affect you this way? How would you have responded to Peter's sermon?
2. In this reading Peter says the following about Jesus: "When he was insulted, he returned no insult." Is he referring to the suffering inflicted on a person who does good? Can you give other examples in which this has been the case? Have you had this experience? Where do you think Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King got their ideas of nonviolence?
3. When flocks were mingled together, each flock would recognize the sound of their own shepherd's voice and come to him, ignoring other shepherds' voices. Can you tell which "voice" in your life belongs to the Good Shepherd?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Almighty ever-living God, lead us to a share in the joys of heaven, so that the humble flock may reach where the brave Shepherd has gone before. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen

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### **Prayer to St. Michael**

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen